



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

DEPARTMENT OF NURSING EDUCATION

IN CHARGE OF

ISABEL M. STEWART, R.N.

THE MOVEMENT FOR SHORTER HOURS IN NURSES' TRAINING SCHOOLS

Nurses' Organizations Take an Important Step.—At the January meeting of representatives of the three national nursing associations, it was decided that the time had come to undertake a definite movement for shorter hours in nursing schools. Plans are being made to bring this matter to the attention of trustees and superintendents of hospitals throughout the country and to enlist the support of a great many influential organizations and of the general public in establishing an *eight-hour day* and a *fifty-two-hour week* for pupil nurses.

It is scarcely necessary to convince nurses themselves of the need for shorter hours in training schools or to ask for their support and coöperation in the coming campaign. From long observation and from personal experience we have seen the effects of the long hours of hospital duty and we know that they are injurious not only to the individual pupils, but to the nursing schools themselves and to the nursing profession as a whole. We know that the long hours do injure the health of pupil nurses and sap their energy and their spirit. We know that they seriously interfere with all our efforts to improve the educational work in our schools. We know that it is the long hours of duty more than any other one thing, which discourages young nurses and makes them drop out of training schools,—indeed so deep-rooted is the objection to long hours and over work in the average hospital that we are no longer able to attract into our schools enough good candidates to carry on our work. There is no doubt that this question is at the root of many of our most difficult problems in nursing to-day, and that we shall not be able to get much farther until we have tackled it.

In our devotion to our hospitals, and our desire not to complicate their already difficult problems, nurses have hesitated a long time to take a definite stand on this question and have labored for many years under conditions which we have been unable to justify and yet seemingly unable to help. But we have finally come to the point where we simply cannot afford to let the matter drift any longer. Now that our organizations have taken hold, there is not much doubt that the campaign will be effectively carried on and that it will succeed.

There are two or three things which ought to be made clear in the very beginning. One is that graduate nurses are not seeking anything for themselves in this movement. We are not proposing that

the eight-hour day should apply to the private nurse or even to the graduate nurses in hospitals,—only to the pupils in training. It is primarily an educational rather than a purely economic problem. The nurse must be considered as a student not as an employee, and for this reason the point of attack will have to be rather different from that usually adopted in supporting shorter hours for wage-earners.

Further, in backing this movement we wish it distinctly understood that we are not in any way guilty of disloyalty to our hospitals, nor do we wish to arouse public antagonism to them. We know that some of the responsibility lies at our doors, as well as theirs. We are confident that the majority of trustees and superintendents of hospitals have only to consider the actual facts of the case, and to know the attitude of the public on this question and they will be ready to do the right thing by their pupil nurses. We are just as much concerned as they are in maintaining the good name and the efficiency of hospitals, and this is one of the reasons why we feel justified in urging a change of policy in the matter of students' hours. We know that the hospital will do better work if it brings itself more in line with modern standards of efficiency and good business principles. An institution which claims the support of the public as a scientific and humanitarian institution, cannot afford to be so far behind many frankly commercial enterprises in caring for the health of its workers, and cannot any longer refuse to apply the scientific discoveries regarding the nature and effects of fatigue which are now almost universally known and accepted by even the man in the street.

Nurses who wish to present the case for shorter hours in a reasonable and convincing way, will have to be familiar with these recent discoveries, and be able to quote the opinions and evidence of experts in this field.

What Scientific Experts Say About the Effects of Long Hours and Overwork.—The most comprehensive and authoritative discussion of this whole question will be found in Josephine Goldmark's book on *Fatigue and Efficiency*. Miss Goldmark gives very clearly and simply all the scientific evidence from physiologists, psychologists, chemists, physicians, etc., to show just what the nature of fatigue is and what it does to the human body.

A few of the more important of these facts are summarized here. It is of course a well established scientific fact that the waste products generated by long continued muscular action, act as a toxin or poison on the body, and unless this poison is eliminated during the resting period following, it will inevitably affect injuriously the muscles, the nerves, the sense organs and all the physical and mental activities of the individual.

The results of fatigue are *cumulative*—that is, the little over-strain each day which is not fully compensated and which may scarcely be noticed at all, gradually encroaches upon the worker's total strength and endurance and soon permanently lowers the capacity for work and the general level of health. It has been proven that after real fatigue sets in, it takes a much greater effort to overcome it and a longer period of rest to recuperate, than if work is stopped always before the point of exhaustion is reached.

In proportion as physical work is at the same time mentally fatiguing—the greater the attentiveness it requires, so much the sooner does fatigue appear. People working under nervous strain need longer time for rest and recreation than do those doing purely physical work.

The condition of fatigue is *not always conscious*, the health being often seriously undermined without the subject feeling the ordinary symptoms of tiredness at all. Experts speak of a kind of fatigue anaesthesia with which many of us are familiar, which creates a false exhilaration, an over-stimulation, concealing the underlying condition and driving the worker on to greater effort. The collapse, when it comes, in these cases is likely to be much more serious than where people feel tired more readily and “give in” sooner. The effect of fatigue on younger people who have not reached their full maturity, is generally known to be more serious than on older people. The age between twenty and thirty years seems to be the most susceptible in relation to nervous disorders brought on by over-work and over-strain. It is proven that women are more susceptible to fatigue than men and that when they do break down they take longer to get back to normal health. Fatigue has also a decided effect in reducing fertility in women, and in undermining racial vitality.

The relation of over-work and long hours *to illness* is supported by a wealth of clinical evidence. Fatigue is declared “to constitute a permanent predisposition to all diseases.” It creates a condition of lowered resistance which not only invites infections of all kinds but also aggravates the course of the disease, and increases the morbidity. The conditions commonly resulting from over-work are colds, sore throats, infected fingers, indigestion, insomnia, anaemia and heart troubles, as well as the more serious infections such as tuberculosis, pneumonia, diphtheria, etc. It has been abundantly proven in other fields of work where statistics have been kept that with shorter hours there is much less time lost for sickness, and the mortality rate is lower. One authority states that men on twelve-hour duty were found to have 75 per cent more sickness than men on an eight-hour day.

The relation of fatigue to accidents and mistakes has been well

established. The attention flags, there is difficulty in concentrating thought, reaction time is diminished, the senses of touch, hearing, and sight are also impaired, and the result is that accidents often occur which injure the worker, herself, or others. We know that in nursing where concentrated attention and alertness are so necessary, the patient's life is often endangered by the mistakes or oversight of an over-tired nurse.

The first sign of fatigue is usually a diminished output and a deterioration in the quality of the work done. This is something which can often be actually counted in dollars and cents and, astonishing as it may seem, the evidence all shows that with shorter hours the production is more and the cost less, than with long hours. The most interesting study of this question is found in the report of the English Ministry of Munitions on the Health of the Munitions Worker, published in 1917. Under the demands of war, the women in munitions factories were working long hours with a good deal of overtime, and their health was evidently being affected. It was proven that by reducing the hours, and giving the necessary daily and weekly rest periods, the health of the workers was greatly improved and the output of munitions was increased instead of decreased. This whole report is exceedingly interesting and pertinent.

The questions of overtime and of night work are fully discussed in this report and in Miss Goldmark's book. It is proven that work after hours is nearly always poor work, and that when one goes beyond the point where normal fatigue has set in, it takes twice or three times as long to get back to the normal again. There is every evidence that night work is harder on the health than day work, that there is more illness among night workers, and that the quality of the work as well as the morale of the worker, inevitably suffers. The effect of long hours in reducing mental activity has also been abundantly proven. The mind which is drugged by the toxins of fatigue does not grasp ideas so readily, does not remember them so well, cannot maintain attention for any period of time, cannot concentrate on study or on any form of mental work. Long hours of work are fatal to any kind of live intellectual activity.

With the lowering of physical resistance and the dulling of the mental powers, it is shown that there is nearly always a weakening of moral resistance as well, due to over-strain and over-work. Men and women who are physically exhausted have less self-control, they lose their stamina and their spirit, they become listless and depressed or they become feverish and restless and constantly crave excitement or stimulation of some kind. Often they are irritable and discontented or hypersensitive and excitable and this inevitably affects all their

work and their relationships with other people. Even when tired people are not markedly abnormal, there is a constant feeling of "staleness" which inevitably affects their ambitions and their outlook on life.

Besides the two books mentioned, nurses will find a great deal of excellent material in a brief of the Supreme Court entitled *The Case of the Shorter Work Day* which is reprinted by the National Consumers' League, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York. This brief contains evidence from a very large number of experts, both in this country and abroad. A shorter brief presenting the case of the California eight-hour law as applied to nursing schools, will also be found to be very suggestive. A few copies of this brief may be obtained from the National Consumers' League.

A recent book by Dr. Frederick S. Lee entitled *The Human Machine and Industrial Efficiency*, gives an excellent and very readable summary of recent experiments and studies carried out largely in connection with war industries. A few of his recommendations for keeping workers at their best are quoted here. It is well to remember that the great object during the war was to get the maximum product from every worker.

In order to preserve the working power, daily fatigue should not be so great that it cannot be substantially removed by the night's rest; weekly fatigue ought likewise to be dispelled by the rest of Sunday. If this is not accomplished, if there is a residue of this powerful obstacle to efficiency accumulating from day to day and from week to week, serious results will surely follow.

If night work is necessitated it should be confined to men only, and the working night should not be longer than the working day. Exact records of the output of all individual workers should be kept, where the nature of the work makes it possible, and the effects on output, of changes in the working conditions, should be carefully observed. Constant watch should be made, with the help of exact tests if possible, for evidences of over-fatigue, and if they are found, the conditions of labor for the individual should be lightened. Overtime should be resorted to, if at all, only in occasional emergencies, and should be followed by at least an equal period of rest taken from the following day's work. Six working days should be followed by one day of rest. Legal holidays should be strictly observed, and a half-holiday on a week day is advisable.

The Committee on Education of the National League of Nursing Education, of which Miss Nutting is chairman, has now in preparation some material in pamphlet form which will help in gathering together the most important arguments from these and other sources. It is expected that every nurse in the country will make herself responsible for her share in this campaign. If she does, it is safe to say that before the year 1920, the eight-hour day for pupil nurses will be an accomplished fact, and we shall have taken another big step in the advancement of nursing education.